

S E R M O N

Preached before the

S O C I E T Y

F O R T H E

Reformation of Manners

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S A L T E R S - H A L L

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JOHN CONDER, D.D.

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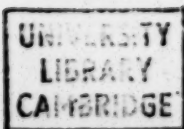
I Epistle of JOHN iii. 8.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.

WE are met together, Sirs, on the very important business of *Reformation*. A sound this, which will ever be delightful to the ear of the wise and good! And to us of these nations it ought to be peculiarly dear, both as *men* and *christians*; that famous æra of our national reformation from popery, serving to remind us, of what (I hope) will never be forgotten, namely, a deliverance from the most fatal ignorance, superstition and bigotry, by which the minds of men had been so long enslaved; which merciful event hath paved the way to those unspeakable privileges, and to that height of liberty, civil and religious, which is the boast and the glory of *Britons*.

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Reformation, in the whole compass of the subject, extends to our religious principles and sentiments, to our stated modes of public worship and devotion, and to the inward tempers and dispositions of mens minds, as well as to their external conduct and manners; things which have a close and necessary connexion with one another, as they respect the everlasting felicity of individuals: but with respect to communities or collective bodies of men, a proper regulation of the outward behaviour, a *reformation of the morals*, is the special and uniform object of our attention. Nor does it appear, either from reason or revelation, that the force of human laws, or the coercive power of magistrates or others, ought ever to be farther extended: while it is as evident from both, that the safety of our persons, the security of our properties, the good order and benefit of communities, and the administration of civil government, as well as the honour of God and true religion, are highly interested in the just exertion of such power and the execution of such laws.

The sphere of your activity as a Society lies within a yet narrower compass; for the vicious practices you propose to suppress are meerly the more notorious and scandalous articles of *profaneness* and *debauchery*; such instances of downright wickedness as every sober and virtuous mind must needs detest: practices, which are a common annoyance to mankind, a scandal to the christian name, a contradiction to the christian hope, and a daring affront to the Majesty of heaven and earth; and which call down
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his severest judgments upon the nation wherein they prevail. Vices which, it is difficult to say, whether it is most for the interest of *religion* or of sound *policy* to discourage and suppress. For *righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people**.

To make some representation of the nature and importance of your arduous undertaking; to animate and fortify your minds against the great and singular difficulties which attend it; and to engage the christian and generous assistance of others, even all the friends of religion, nay of morality and common decency, in forwarding so laudable and beneficial a work, is the service expected from me on the present occasion. To answer which ends I know of no subject more suitable than the text before us; in which words two things present themselves to view.

First, We have the fatal connexions and conduct of the vicious and profane. *They are of the devil, and do his works.*

Secondly, The blessed and important errand of the Son of God, namely, to *destroy the works of the devil*: This was his design in becoming incarnate, the very business on which he was commissioned and sent into the world, nor will he fail to accomplish the arduous work which his Father hath anointed and sent him to perform: Animating truth to all that fear God! for since they have so potent and so excellent a Leader to patronize
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* Prov. xiv. 34.

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their righteous cause, and to succeed and bless their humble and zealous (though feeble) attempts, in promoting his glory and the welfare of their fellow-creatures, with what courage and firmness may they join, and persevere in their spiritual conflict with the powers of darkness?

In pursuing this noble subject to the purpose in hand, I must briefly attend to the following things.

I. Enquire what we are to understand by the works of the devil, and why they are so called?

II. Consider the person and work of the Son of God.

III. The manner and the means of his accomplishing this blessed work.

IV. Make some application of the subject to the present occasion.

I. We enquire what is meant by the works of the devil, and why so called?

Hereby in general is meant all the sin and wickedness which is committed in the world; all that moral turpitude and enormity which is found in the hearts and actions of men.

1. By the works of the devil understand sin in general, all the sins of men. All sin is a violation of the will of the great Creator. It is a trans-

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transgression of his holy and righteous law, a failure in our necessary allegiance, a rebellion against his rightful authority, a revolting from his dominion and government; and this *rebellion is indeed as the sin of witchcraft* *; it fascinates, beguiles, benumbs the sinner's conscience, and pushes him on, from bad to worse, till in the end his iniquity is found to be hateful. And in this sense, *the whole world lieth in wickedness* †. Sinners are under the conduct of a deceitful and self-deceiving heart, being alienated from God and goodness, prone to evil, and enemies in their minds by wicked works; the scriptures pronounce, that *there is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable, there is none that doth good, no not one* ‡. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* §. Guilt and depravity make one dreadful load, which extends its weight to all the human race, and had inevitably sunk us in endless woe, but for the *manifestation of the Son of God*. But,

2. By the works of the devil, understand more especially those flagitious and daring crimes which multitudes of mankind run into. All men are sinners, but all run not into the same excesses of riot. We read of *foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction* ||; as also of those, *who being past feeling, (having their conscience seared as with an hot iron) give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness*

* 1 Sam. xv. 23.

† 1 John v. 19.

‡ Rom. iii. 10—12.

§ Rom. iii. 23.

|| 1 Tim. vi. 9.

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cleanness with greediness. All that is in the world, (says the apostle John) in the world as it now stands, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life†. There are the lusts both of the flesh and of the mind, and when a person gives himself up and becomes abandoned to either, he is transformed as it were into a devil or a brute. These are the works of the flesh, of which we have the sad and affecting catalogue, Gal. v. 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Such gross and vile enormities not only bring swift destruction on the heads of the transgressors themselves, but are also mischievous and dangerous to others: Accordingly it is worth remarking, that the apostle, previous to a like black assemblage of characters in the last days, calls them *perilous times* ‡: Suggesting thereby the pernicious effects of such base examples; and the dangers they expose a nation or people to, where they are winked at and allowed. Awful are the words of the prophet to Israel; *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land: but swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land**

* Eph. iv. 19.
† 1 John ii. 16.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 1.

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land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish*. When such abominations prevail with impunity, a nation ripens apace for ruin; happy is it for a people "when iniquity is made to hide its head, and the vile transgressor is ashamed to shew his face:" How ardently should we put up the sacred petition, "Let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but do thou establish the just, for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins †."

These are the things my text calls *the works of the devil*; and why they are so called, is the *second* branch of the present enquiry. Nor is there any difficulty to shew the propriety of the appellation. In order however to enter into the spirit and force of the expression, it is necessary to observe,

First, That revelation opens with the doctrine of *angels*, good and bad: it acquaints us with an order of knowing intelligent invisible creatures, of capacities and powers vastly superior to man: it acquaints us with the apostasy of a part of the angelic world from their duty and allegiance to their Maker. It represents these wicked apostate spirits as persisting in their rebellion, as being the avowed enemies to God and goodness, and as exerting their utmost influence in our world, for the defacing his image and opposing his glory. On this account,

Secondly,

* Hosea iv. 2-3.

† Psalm vii. 9.

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Secondly, We read, that from the beginning they have been the most fatal and invidious foes to the human race. The history of the old serpent is given us, in almost the first chapter of our Bibles, and in it is given the certain origin of evil in our world: Through the falshood and wiles of *Satan*, our first father was soon tempted and betrayed into a sad and ruinous revolt from God: A revolt which hath introduced and entailed guiltiness, depravity, misery, and death upon all mankind.

Thirdly, As the fruit of man's original apostasy, the devil and his angels have gained a dangerous influence over the minds of sinners by the righteous permission of heaven. The tempter has access to our spirits, and a power to suggest to our minds, to irritate our passions, and urge strongly and with great impetuosity to the commission of evil: our guilt renders us exposed, and our depravity an easy prey to that *roaring lion, who walketh about seeking whom he may devour* *. It is on this account the scripture stiles him, "The god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience†," by whom they are said to *be led captive at his will* ‡: nay, *that he hath the power of death in his hand* §; not the power of a sovereign or judge, but of an executioner to inflict calamities, and woes, and sorrows, and death itself upon the finally wicked and disobedient. It is therefore obvious both
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* 1 Pet. v. 8.
† Eph. ii. 2.

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 26.
§ Heb. ii. 14.

from scripture and facts, that man with all his boasted freedom is a captive and a slave to the prince of darkness, a willing captive, who takes pleasure in his chains : and such is the spiritual tyranny and power which Satan exercises over the minds of the wicked, that, if the grace of our God prevent not, he plunges their souls at length into certain and endless perdition.

Upon these principles it is easy to assign the reason why the sins of men are called the works of the devil. " Inasmuch as the devil led the way to apostasy by his own infernal example ; inasmuch as he was the immediate agent and instrument of seducing the human race ; and inasmuch as the sins of men are the materials on which he works, for erecting, maintaining, and strengthening the throne of iniquity in the world ; and for opposing the kingdom of God, and the designs of his mercy and grace amongst the sons of men." The devil is a cunning and an assiduous foe, skilful to watch every opportunity, and to take every advantage for establishing his kingdom ; he knows how to avail himself of the pride and passion, the cruelty and malice, the ignorance and folly, the bigotry and superstition, as well as of the more brutal lusts and appetites of men ; for resisting and weakening the interests of truth and holiness, and for the forwarding his own murderous designs upon the children of men. *But for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

Which brings us to our second general head.

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II. To

II. To consider the *person* and *work* of the Son of God. And here we have opening to our view the riches of divine compassion and love to man : mercy immeasurable ! love immense ! compassion most free and full and overflowing ! extending itself to the case of the very chief of sinners ; to the pardoning the most hainous and accumulated guilt, and to the effectual deliverance of those from the bondage of sin and Satan, who seemed most securely held in his enslaving and destructive bonds. What we call gospel, is a declaration of this merciful decree of heaven, this adorable design of God to counteract and effectually defeat the counsels of darkness : and herein the foundation and basis of all human hope is laid, namely, in the doctrine of the person and work of the Son of God. He is revealed under the interesting character of the *only Mediator between God and man*. The grand, the sole commissioner of heaven, full of grace and truth, able and willing to accomplish the work his Father sent him to perform ; which work was the complete redemption of transgressors : a redemption both by purchase and by power ; such a redemption as might make way for the believer's intire deliverance from the curse and penalty of a broken law, and for displaying the united glories of the divine perfections in his salvation.

Now this was a work too great and difficult to be undertaken by man or angel ; a creature of the most exalted capacities and powers was found unequal to such a charge ; which therefore of necessity devolved on the Son of God ;
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and thus devolved by the appointment of heaven, to *the intent that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by* (or by means of) *the church the manifold wisdom of God* *. The safety and glory of the church depend upon the capacity and grace of its Redeemer and Head: what Christ is in himself, and what he is to us, by the appointment of the Father, unite in our consideration of the riches of the divine compassions to fallen men.

And here two or three things deserve our distinct contemplation and regard.

I. The dignity of the Mediator's person, "The Son of God, God's own, his only begotten and eternal Son." Nor is this an empty name and title, it is most evidently expressive of the intrinsic excellency of his nature and the uncreated glories of his person. The scriptures abound in assertions of this kind, and furnish the christian's faith with an object truly divine: We are taught to view him as nothing less than *God manifest in the flesh* †—*declared to be the Son of God with power* ‡—*who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God* §. Nor is it possible that his claim should be ill founded, while he is expressly asserted to be *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person* ||: and concerning whom it is further declared, that *he upholdeth all things by the word of his power*; as well as *made the world at first*: Freely indeed, and in amazing compassion to

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* Eph. iii. 10.
† 1 Tim. iii. 16.
‡ Rom. i. 4.

§ Phil. ii. 6.
|| Heb. i. 2, 3.

the souls of men, "He made himself of no reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." That is, he voluntarily condescended to assume the human nature, and the character and work of a servant, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, being subject in all things to the will of his Father, for the sake of obtaining an eternal redemption for us: but while these things wonderfully enhance the Redeemer's love, they no way lessen or eclipse the real glory of his person, which is uniformly proposed to our faith, in such a point of light as serves to give the christian the most affecting view of the love of God in so great and unspeakable a gift, and in providing so solid a ground for his trust and triumph. *In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life †.*

2. The Son of God was *manifested*. This expresses his commission and furniture both: his work was of such a nature, that it was necessary the Son of God should become the son of man, that is, should assume our nature, and become incarnate: for in undertaking our cause he undertook to pay the full price of our redemption; forgiveness of sin was to be obtained only by making propitiation, for *without shedding of blood there could be no remission ‡*; wherefore it was necessary he should have somewhat to offer; should

* 1 John iv. 9.

† John iii. 16.

‡ Heb. ix. 22.

should be furnished with a nature in which he might suffer; the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God: thus *he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* §: and “forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage ||.” This is the great and leading article in the mystery of godliness, namely, “God was manifest in the flesh.” He was manifest in his incarnation, manifest in his personal ministry, manifest on the cross, manifest in his resurrection and ascension, and is now made manifest in our gospel: *for we have not followed cunningly devised fables, (says the apostle) when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty.* 2 Pet. i. 16.

3. We have the end of his manifestation among the sons of men, namely, to *destroy* the works of the devil. The term *destroy*, comprehends the whole work of the church’s salvation from first to last: It includes the eternal determinate purpose and plan of divine wisdom and love, the personal sufferings and work of the Saviour in the fulness of time, and all the exertions of power and grace divine, in the actual conversion of sinners to God, in the maintenance and advancement of the divine life in the christian’s heart, as also the several interpositions of providence, in controlling and defeating the malice of earth and hell,

§ 2 Cor. v. 21.

|| Heb. ii. 15.

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hell, till he shall have raised all his faithful followers above the reach of every work and wile of the wicked one; landing them all safe on the wished-for shore of immortality and bliss. But it is time to proceed to our next head; that is,

III. To consider the *manner* and the *means* of accomplishing this blessed work; or how the Son of God hath, or will destroy the works of the devil: An enquiry which would admit of great enlargement, were we to extend our thoughts to the whole compass of the subject; but at present let the following strictures suffice.

1. Our blessed Redeemer, the Son of God, hath laid the foundation of this great work in his own sufferings and death. The works of the devil could not be destroyed but by the death of the deliverer; Satan's great hold of human nature is owing to our guiltiness before God, which exposes to the wrath and curse of heaven: Fundamentally therefore to all actual deliverance a ransom must be paid, an atonement and satisfaction made to the law and justice of God; and this our blessed Redeemer hath accomplished once for all by his great oblation; *who hath by his one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified* *. He having finished transgression and made an end of sin, the blessings of pardon and peace, holiness and eternal life, become the sure gifts of grace to all his spiritual seed, that is, to all who believe and turn to the Lord; *for by him all that believe are justified from*

* Heb. x. 14.

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from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses §; and this is the door of hope opened to us in the gospel.

2. The Son of God destroys the works of the devil by the efficacy of his grace on the hearts and consciences of men, through the gospel. Christ's mediatorial commission and work does not consist merely in his making atonement for our sins, but also in his setting up a kingdom of grace and holiness in the hearts of sinners: As a reward of his sufferings on the cross, he was crowned with glory and honour: *Him hath God exalted with his own right hand; and it was to this very end, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins* †. And as the fruit of the Redeemer's exaltation, the gospel of the grace of God was sent among the nations, the good tidings of peace and salvation are published abroad in the world; and a gospel it is, which is accompanied with the spirit and blessing of the Most high; by which means multitudes of mankind in every age have been convinced, reclaimed, and converted: convinced of the evil and danger of their ways; reclaimed from the paths of the destroyer; and savingly converted to God; so becoming sincere and spiritual subjects of the Mediator's kingdom, and visible monuments and trophies of his distinguishing and all-conquering grace and power. These are christians indeed; whose hearts are right with God, who being reconciled and renewed by grace, have no longer fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but *being made free from sin, and becoming servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness,*

§ Acts xiii. 39.

† Acts v. 31.

liness, and the end everlasting life †. And as often as a soul thus repents, believes, and returns to God, Satan loses a subject, and his ruinous designs and works of darkness are defeated and destroyed.

3. The Son of God destroys the works of the devil by the exertion of his power and authority in the government of the world: the kingdom of providence, as well as grace, is under the wise and holy administration of the Son of God: *By him kings reign, and princes decree justice* §: The greatest princes and potentates on the earth are subject to his rule; *worship him, all ye gods* ||. He is never at a loss for instruments and means to do his pleasure, and his wise and holy pleasure it is to make use of instruments and means. Besides the immediate efficacy of his grace, there are the several instruments of his providence for furthering the ends of his grace and glory: Instruments sometimes raised up *occasionally*, to do eminent services in their day and station for the cause of God and religion: while there are others who may be justly stiled, his *standing* ordinances for good.

His faithful ministers are such, the ministers of the everlasting gospel; all whom he has called and qualified with integrity and zeal to dispense the faithful word, of whatever party and denomination among men; these are endeavouring, in the name and strength of their Lord and Master, both to preach down and live down the vices and immoralities of the times: and persons
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† Rom. vi. 22.
§ Prov. viii. 15.

|| Psal. xcvi. 7.

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and bloodshed, would be every where practised,

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but for the restraints of human laws, and the terror of the ruler's sword: so that a wise, a righteous, an impartial and active magistrate, is the ordinance of God for the greatest temporal good to mankind; accordingly we find it a most express command in scripture, "That christians be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates*."—"To submit themselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:" *i. e.* to every regulation and appointment of the civil government for the common good; governors *being set for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well*†. And we are told more fully still, "that the higher powers are ordained of God; and they who resist them, (in the righteous execution of their charge) resist an ordinance of God," whose ministers they are, in point of office, even though they were heathens in point of religion; and therefore they bear not the sword in vain‡. Their office then is most sacred and important, and the vigorous and due exertion of their authority, in suppressing wickedness and immorality, is of the greatest utility and benefit both to religion and civil society. Happy is it for a people, when the laws of the realm second and enforce our observance of the laws of the true God; and when their magistrates and governors rule in the fear of the Lord, and with a sincere and truly christian ambition to approve themselves both in the sight of God and man; being terrors to the wicked and profane, and an encouragement and praise to the virtuous and good.

Thus

* Tit. iii. 1.

† 1 Pet. ii. 13.

‡ Rom. xiii. 1-5.

Thus I have dispatched the several heads proposed ; and what remains is,

IV. To attempt some improvement of the subject suitable to the occasion : and this will be dispatched in three particulars.

Use 1. What has been above represented may serve to convince us, “ of what prodigious importance to a nation it is, that those who have it in their power, see to the effectual execution of the laws against Vice and Profaneness.” It is a very great happiness to a community to be in possession of good and wholsom laws : But what are the best of laws, unless they are duly put into execution ? The benefit of society arises not from the enacting but the observance of laws. Almost every thing that is dear and valuable to us as men and christians, is in some sort connected with the vigilance of those in power : A truth which stands with me in so strong a point of light, that I own, had I a voice which could reach the ear of all who bear rule in the land, especially of the worshipful magistrates of this great and populous city, I should think myself well employed in exerting it on the present subject and occasion.

With due deference to their exalted character and station, I should think it my duty humbly to remind them——“ How greatly the good of *civil society* and the present happiness of all ranks and degrees of men, depends upon their activity and vigilance in putting our laws in force : the benefit of society, the common safety and com-

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mon good, distinct from the obligations of religion, and all considerations of another world, would furnish me with an obvious and very cogent plea for the vigorous exertion of their authority. The necessity and utility of civil government is a thing self-evident; and the inconsistency of some vices with the prosperity and good of the community, is equally obvious to common sense. Vile presumptuous sinners, the practisers in chambering and wantonness, in drunkenness and riot, injustice and oppression, rapine and robbery, cruelty and blood; the impudent dealers in falsehood and profaneness, blasphemy and oaths, are so many avowed enemies, not only to God but to human kind, the pests of society, the common nuisance, the scandal and the bane of communities, who, if not carefully discouraged and suppressed, like persons that are infected with the plague, will diffuse the dreadful contagion wherever they come. If therefore in such cases magistracy sleeps, and the reins of government are suffered to drop, and remain on the neck of wickedness and vice; if the morals of the people are neglected, so that lewdness, debauchery, and every other beastly and criminal excess is connived at, and suffered to be practised with boldness and impunity: what with the contagious and fascinating nature of all sin indulged, what with the force of evil example, and what with the extravagancies, miseries, and hasty ruin, which are ever in the rear of enormous crimes, the most opulent and prosperous state in the world will soon sink into poverty and contempt, decay and ruin, falling by its own dead weight, without any violence from a foreign hand.

hand.——I would wish farther to remind them of “the sacredness of their office, and the height of their commission.” They are *ministers of God*, who bear his commission as well as man’s: ministers of God, and therefore they *bear not the sword in vain*. And how does the argument gather strength when we add *christian* to the whole! Christian magistrates in a christian land; under the commission of a christian, a virtuous, a protestant prince! Here the motives rise with grandeur on the mind.—“A compassion not only to the bodies but the souls of men,—the honour of God and true religion in the world,—the promotion of that virtue and goodness which is reckoned to be its own reward,—the preventing the present and endless ruin of fellow-immortals,—as well as the blessing and reward of heaven here and hereafter.” For *they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever**.

I could not forbear, with the greatest seriousness and ardour, to urge the several pleas of christianity for their effectual countenance and aid in promoting the work of reformation of manners.

I would plead the case of the wicked and profligate themselves; those unhappy immortals, who, being carried down the torrent of a general and fatal depravity, are swiftly moving in a course that will soon drown them in perdition. These are proof against the most weighty counsels and warnings; unimpressed by the
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* Dan. xii. 3.

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tenderest advices, the most passionate intreaties, madly determined on most certain ruin! they need *the more* the friendly hand of power, kindly to force them on the shore of temperance and sobriety for a time, to recover them, if possible, to some recollection and cool thought, and to see the evil and danger of their ways; that so, by the blessing of God, they may be recovered from the snare of the wicked, be reclaimed, reformed, renewed, and saved from ruin.

I would plead the case of others, especially the rising generation. How grieving! how alarming the aspect of the times! how numerous the temptations to profaneness and bold sinning! what numbers of lovely and hopeful youth are seduced, enslaved, and finally ruined by their unrestrained intemperances and lusts! they step out from under parental restraints with all the vigour and bloom of healthful innocence; they engage at first in the business of their station with diligence and care, and with a becoming ambition to do well in the world; their minds at this time furnished with sentiments of integrity, modesty, frugality and virtuous industry, to their parents comfort and their masters satisfaction. But after a time, through that self-sufficiency and want of caution, which are too common at their years, a temptation presents, and they venture upon the enchanted ground of the fashionable amusements and pleasures of the town; and thus they soon become a prey to them who lie in wait to destroy. One fatal evening's debauch opens and paves the way to gradual and utter ruin; the bounds of modesty and virtue transgressed, their minds and consciences become

become defiled, and a total alteration for the worse soon appears : their active industry and care sink into indolence and neglect ; temperance and frugality give place to extravagancy and excess ; while that youthful modesty, docility, and delight in duty, which used to give a lustre to all their conduct, are strangely lost in boldness, impertinence, and impatience of all control ; if not followed (as is too often the case) by the practices of fraud and deceit, and the more desperate measures of supporting the farther gratifications of their lusts : mean while the healthful bloom of countenance withers apace into paleness and disease, and nature itself soon droops, decays, languishes and issues in death. And thus how often does the tender parent lose the promising and delightful child ; the master a dutiful and faithful servant, the community a useful member, and the sovereign a good subject ! all in consequence of an unhappy sufferance of these nurseries of vice, these works of the devil, to remain so ripe and daring, which it is much in the magistrates power to discountenance and destroy. Farther,

Was I favoured with an hearing, I would zealously recommend the plan and design of this Society to their worthy patronage and care : A Society whose plan and proceedings are not calculated to serve the interests of any particular sect or party among us, but to promote the public good ; the public good in its most essential interests, the *morals* of the *people* : A Society moved with a disinterested zeal for the honour of God and true religion, concerned for the common good, the present and everlasting welfare of
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their fellow-men ; seeing with grief and concern the dangerous and destructive effects of a general depravity and corruption of manners, have entered themselves as volunteers, to act in opposition to the crying sins of the times : but exerting themselves wholly in conformity to the statute laws of the realm, and under the authority and intire direction of the magistrate, with a view to assist him to the utmost of their power in detecting, exposing, and punishing those enormous and foul crimes, which endanger the welfare and very being of society. Men of sober and worthy characters, who thus dedicate much of their time and pains, nay who hazard often their health, their safety, their limbs, and even their lives for the public utility, must needs deserve the warmest countenance and encouragement from the christian magistrate, and the thanks and esteem of their fellow-citizens.

Use 2. It is farther to be inferred from what has been advanced, that as the Reformation of Manners is a very important and beneficial, so it is a most arduous and difficult undertaking. The works of the devil cannot be destroyed but by great assiduity and pains, and in the face of the most desperate resistance and opposition : Permit me then to address you as a Society, with respect to this your laudable and very weighty engagement.

All fulsome praise and flattery apart, by which I could propose no end, I view you as a Society embodied in the fear of the true God, and animated by a spirit and with a view that is truly christian, meaning by the whole of your proceedings

ceedings to promote the honour of our holy religion and the good of mankind, and willing to be at great pains and expence for so useful and worthy an end. Yet however good your intentions, the use and success of your undertaking depends under God upon the prudence and propriety of your conduct in the execution; nor ought you ever to forget that the best of causes has miscarried by an unskilful and improper management; which I hope will ever stimulate your minds to conduct yourselves in all things with the utmost propriety and care; perhaps our blessed Saviour's advice is applicable to no particular case more fully than to yours: *Be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves* *.

They that would be instrumental in reforming others, must be unblameable and circumspect in all things themselves, keeping themselves even from the appearances of evil: for the more public our character the more observed our conduct; and every personal and private mistake in behaviour will be imputed to the whole Society; for which reason you will I hope always continue to be solicitous and careful more about the fitness than the number of your members. And as to the business in hand, you had need be armed with every moral and christian principle, in order to maintain your ground; for the lovers of unlawful pleasure will take every opportunity to affront and abuse you, as well as every advantage to discourage and distress you. Multitudes also, of more decent characters themselves, yet are so far neuters to morality and goodness, as to wish your confusion rather than success: nay many there are of some sobriety and religious profession, who through a false and ill-judged compassion to those you bring under

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* Matt. x. 16.

the lash of the law, or from a mistaken and extravagant notion of liberty, and an excessive distaste to all compulsions of every kind, or from whatever other cause, are unhappily inclined to receive every unfavourable report, and to take pleasure in every instance of opposition to your good designs. In such circumstances as these, it is easy to see what piety and prudence, what patience and candour, what steadiness, courage, and christian integrity in all things, are in the highest degree necessary to the prosecuting an affair of this kind with advantage. Whatever your provocations be, arm yourselves with patience, moderate your passions, guard against personal disgust, and every desire to revenge personal injuries and affronts, or to express even a resentment: Let your temper be truly christian, be moderate and candid, compassionate and kind, even to them who least of all deserve it; by which means you will evidence to every man's conscience, that you are animated by that Spirit which is from above; and that you are the friends and not the enemies of those you bring to justice for their crimes.

These things have been particularly inculcated on the like occasions by much abler hands; so that neither time nor inclination admit of enlargement.—I conclude this head therefore with two or three articles of advice; which I apprehend peculiarly necessary in the present times. And,

1. My advice is, That you be always exceeding careful that your whole proceedings are such as the laws of the land will justify and support :
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Consider well your instructions and their extent : Take particular care you give no just occasion for any to blame you, or for delinquents to take any advantage against you : nor is it sufficient that you guard against giving any advantage to persons of character and probity, but if possible also defeat the efforts of villany, perfidy, perjury, and vice itself ; remembering that your conflict is with those who have no character to lose, and no conscience to restrain them from the most unfair and injurious proceedings.

2. In apprehending the vile and the profligate, take special care you at no time mistake your persons.

Lewdness is a reigning sin, and the streets of concourse swarm with prostitutes ; but in apprehending these dangerous seducers of our youth, great caution must be always used, that none but such be ever molested ; a single mistake here, will be heightened into an unpardonable crime : And sorry I am to say it, but it must be said, your difficulty is peculiarly great in this particular as times now go : Times, wherein unhappily (for the cause of modesty and sobriety) it is reckoned the height of politeness, for ladies of fashion to give themselves almost every air that used to be deemed a characteristic of the ladies of the town. Herein therefore let the greatest precaution be always taken.

3. My farther advice is, that you obtain the magistrates concurrence and aid as to every branch of your undertaking ; it is by his authority you act, and with his encouragement and help

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help you may hope for success; but without it your utmost and best efforts will prove abortive; and every such instance will greatly weaken your laudable design, and no less strengthen the hands of profaneness and vice. It seems highly necessary also that in all your attempts you should act with united strength and vigour, that you may secure yourselves against the insults and injuries which a smaller number may be exposed to and suffer by. Carry if possible every point you undertake, that those you attempt to bring to justice may have no occasion to exult and triumph.

Finally, As to yourselves, while you are concerned and grieved at the wickedness of the times and are aiming to recover others from the paths of the destroyer, take, O take special heed to your own hearts and ways. Suffer yourselves to do no evil that good may come of it, take no indirect measures, let none of you venture upon forbidden and unwarrantable ground as a means of more effectually detecting the scenes of darkness. But as men fearing God, keep your very garments unspotted by the flesh, abstain from every appearance of evil, and content yourselves with doing all the good you can, though you fall short of doing all the good you would. And in the continued exercise of piety, prudence, precaution and care, you may cheerfully look up to the God of all grace for that direction and protection you need, and for that blessing and success which you desire.

Use 3. From what hath been advanced on this grave and weighty subject, we gather what is the bounden duty of all real christians, namely, to lay
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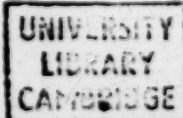
to heart, and (what in them lies) to forward the work of reformation among us. We ought all to be reformers in our different places and stations. Righteousness, we have heard, exalteth a nation, and foul transgressions are the shame, the load and the ruin of it.—Every friend of religion and virtue, nay every friend of his king and country, should be willing therefore to lend an helping hand to promote so good a work. In our families, our neighbourhoods, and our larger spheres of influence and action, we may all do something for the common good: By our instructions, advices, our prayers and our examples, much may be done to recommend religion and sobriety, and to discourage and put to shame the vicious and profane. And it ought to be the great concern of all that wear the christian's name, and would hope to share in his happiness and peace, to depart from all iniquity: the christian faith requires, that *we deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and that we live soberly, righteously and godlily in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ* *. And as it behoves us to be careful of these things for ourselves, so also to use our utmost influence to engage others in the like practice. And in order hereto, besides the means above specified, it is in the power of most of us to aid and assist in so good a work, if not by our personal assistance, yet at least by our liberal contributions towards it.—I most sincerely and warmly recommend to all present as well as to the public the interests of this Society. They are willing to bear great pains and charge for the common good, and are so far from acting with any lucrative or mercenary views, that to avoid

* Tit. ii. 12.

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void all imputations and slanders on that head, they decline receiving any part of those pecuniary fines which by statute-law they are intitled to from offenders. This renders their undertaking very expensive and burdensome; the manner too in which they have been opposed by those they meant to reclaim, has added greatly to this discouraging weight. The Society therefore at present needs and craves your assistance; nor is it reasonable the burden should wholly rest upon them: it is enough that they chearfully bear the numerous hazards and toils, and the unreasonable reproaches and injuries of the vicious and profligate; they highly deserve the thanks and commendation, nay the generous and effectual assistance of all who have the least regard to religion and goodness, sobriety and humanity, decency and good order, nay the common safety and common good: If therefore you have any desire for the public welfare, any concern for your dear children and friends, any zeal for the glory of God, the honour of religion, and the everlasting good of immortal souls, extend your kind and liberal hand of help to so laudable, so beneficial, and benevolent a design. And may our God awaken a general concern for his own interest and glory, and diffuse a public Spirit, and an unfeigned zeal for the public good, through the hearts of all ranks and degrees among us; then, through the grace and power of the Son of God, and his blessing upon the active endeavours of his servants, the works of the devil shall be brought low and destroyed, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever.

THE END.



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